



Notice

Hearings on the Water Quality Standards Revisions

The Washington Department of Ecology is proposing to revise several key aspects of the state's surface water quality standards.

Workshops and Hearings

All workshops begin at 6pm, public hearings begin at 8pm

Wenatchee Mon., Jan. 27, 2003
Chelan Co. Auditorium
400 Douglas

Spokane Tues., Jan. 28, 2003
Spokane Falls Community College
Stud. Union Bldg 17, Lounge AB
3410 W Fort George Wright Dr.

Pasco Wed., Jan. 29, 2003
Columbia Basin College
2600 N. 20th Ave.

Yakima Thurs., Jan. 30, 2003
Ecology Central Region Office
15 West Yakima Ave., Suite 200

Bellingham Mon., Feb. 3, 2003
Whatcom Co. Courthouse
311 Grand Ave.

Seattle Tues., Feb. 4, 2003
Seattle Center
Northwest Rooms: Lopez Room
305 Harrison St.

Port Angeles Wed., Feb. 5, 2003
Vern Burton Center
308 East 4th St.

Vancouver Thurs., Feb. 6, 2003
Water Resources Center
4600 SE Columbia Way

What are the water quality standards?

Washington's surface water quality standards set limits on pollution in our lakes, rivers and marine waters in order to protect beneficial uses, such as swimming and fishing.

Why are they being revised?

The Department of Ecology is completing the first major overhaul of the state's water quality standards in a decade. The revised standards are intended to reflect the latest scientific information and incorporate new state and federal requirements – all aimed at making our waters clean and safe for people, fish and wildlife.

When is the public comment period?

The public is invited to comment on the proposal from **January 2 through March 7, 2003.**

Where may I submit comments?

Online: On the Web page at
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/swqs,
or e-mail swqs@ecy.wa.gov

Mail: Susan Braley
Department of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Phone: (360) 407-6414
Fax: (360) 407-6426

What are the major proposed revisions?

The proposal would change several key aspects of the water quality standards:

- Changes to existing criteria for temperature, dissolved oxygen, bacteria, and ammonia.
- New criteria to protect char (bull trout).
- New criteria to protect agricultural water supplies.
- New language on how to prevent degradation of water quality.
- Moving from a “class-based” system to a “use-based” system for designating beneficial uses of fresh waters.
- More clarity and detail on implementing the regulations.
- Better organization to make the regulations easier to use.

Ecology has attempted to craft a balanced proposal, given conflicting views presented by a broad set of different interests consulted as part of this process. Developing the proposal was difficult and Ecology encourages your review.

How can I get more information on the issues?

The Department of Ecology has prepared draft standards for formal public review. A draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as well as draft Administrative Procedures Act (APA) materials have also been prepared. Focus sheets, decision memos, and lengthy technical documents have been prepared for the key revisions being proposed. A copy of the proposed standards and all accompanying information on the proposal can be found at: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/swqs.

To receive paper copies, or a CD containing all documents, contact Andrew Kolosseus at (360) 407-7543.

What is the schedule for final rule adoption?

The Department of Ecology will hold a formal public review comment period on the proposed rule through March 7, 2003. The final rule and associated APA documentation, as well as the final EIS, will be filed by July 1, 2003.

Federal regulations require that state water quality standards be reviewed and approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for compliance with the Clean Water Act prior to their use. EPA has 60 days to approve or 90 days to disapprove the state adopted standards. Prior to approval, EPA must prepare and submit a biological assessment to the federal fish and wildlife agencies to determine compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). If the state water quality standards are disapproved by EPA because of noncompliance with either the Clean Water Act or ESA, then EPA must promulgate new standards on behalf of the state or seek alternative measures. The new water quality standards will not take effect until this process is completed.

How do I learn more?

To learn more about the proposed water quality standards, contact Susan Braley at (360) 407-6414 or visit our web site at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/swqs. To obtain copies of focus sheets or discussion documents, or to be added to the mailing list, contact Andrew Kolosseus at (360) 407-7543. To receive electronic updates on the water quality standards revisions, send an e-mail message to swqs@ecy.wa.gov, with “Subscribe” as the subject heading.

If you have special accommodation needs, contact Ann Butler at (360) 407-6480. The TTY number is 711 or 1-800-833-6388.